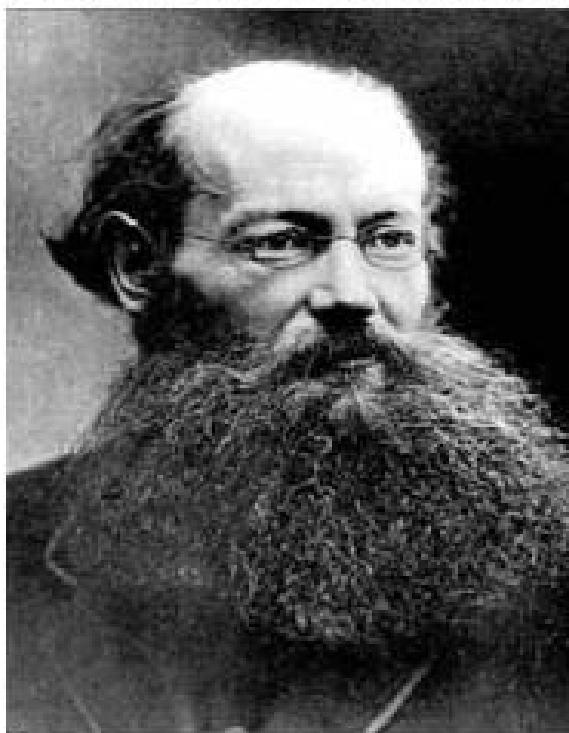


# Anarchist communism - an introduction



A short introduction to anarchist-communism.

Anarchist communism is a form of anarchism that advocates the abolition of the State and capitalism in favour of a horizontal network of voluntary associations through which everyone will be free to satisfy his or her needs.

Anarchist communism is also known as anarcho-communism, communist anarchism, or, sometimes, libertarian communism. However, while all anarchist communists are libertarian communists, some libertarian communists, such as council communists, are not anarchists. What distinguishes anarchist communism from other variants of libertarian communism is the former's opposition to all forms of political power, hierarchy and domination.

Anarchist communism stresses egalitarianism and the abolition of social hierarchy and class distinctions that arise from unequal wealth distribution, the abolition of capitalism and money, and the collective production and distribution of wealth by means of voluntary associations. In anarchist communism, the state and property no longer exist. Each individual and group is free to contribute to production and to satisfy their needs based on their own choice. Systems of production and distribution are managed by their participants.

The abolition of wage labour is central to anarchist communism. With distribution of wealth being based on self-determined needs, people will be free to engage in whatever activities they find most fulfilling and will no longer have to engage in work for which they have neither the temperament nor the aptitude. Anarchist communists argue that there is no valid way of measuring the value of any one person's economic contributions because all wealth is a collective product of current and preceding generations. Anarchist communists argue that any economic system based on wage labour and private property will require a coercive state apparatus to enforce property rights and to maintain the unequal economic relationships that will inevitably arise.



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Well known anarchist communists include Peter, or Piotr, Kropotkin (Russia), Errico Malatesta (Italy) and Nestor Makhno (Ukraine). Kropotkin (pictured above) is often seen as the most important theorist of anarchist communism, outlining his economic ideas in books *The Conquest of Bread* and *Fields, Factories and Workshops*. Kropotkin felt co-operation to be more beneficial than competition, arguing in *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution* that this was illustrated in nature. Anarchist communist ideas were very influential in the introduction of anarchism to Japan through the efforts of Kôtoku Shûsui in the early 1900s who corresponded with Kropotkin and translated his works. Alexander Berkman and Emma Goldman (who were both deported from USA in 1919) became important proponents of

'Communist anarchism' and became especially critical of Bolshevism after they discovered its devastating reality first-hand in Russia, and after the Red Army's crushing of the Kronstadt uprising. They in turn had been influenced by German-born émigrée to the USA, Johann Most, who had earlier helped bring anarchist communist thought to Britain though his contact with Frank Kitz in London around 1880 (see *Anarchist Communism in Britain* for a full historical account).

Many platformists refer to themselves as anarchist communists, although other anarchist communists are uncomfortable with some areas of the *Organisational Platform* document, such as the issue of 'collective responsibility' as supported by Makhno but opposed by Malatesta. While historically many anarchist

communists have been active anarcho-syndicalists, many are critical towards those syndicalists who seek some form of self-managed wage system rather than its abolition, pointing out that any system which maintains economic relations based on reward of effort and exchange is not communist.

Modern day anarchist communists are represented in several organisations within the International of Anarchist Federations, including the Anarchist Federation (Britain).

Platformist anarchist communists include the Workers Solidarity Movement (Ireland) and the North-Eastern Federation of Anarchist Communists (USA). Many nascent Eastern European, Russian and Caucasian anarchist groups identify with anarchist communism and there is a strong anarchist communist current amongst contemporary Latin American and Caribbean anarchist organisations.

## **More information**

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What is anarchism? - Alexander Berkman - Easy to read introduction to 'Communist Anarchism'.

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The Conquest of Bread - Peter Kropotkin - Kropotkin's classic work on how an anarchist-communist society could function.

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Anarchy and "Scientific" Communism - Luigi Fabbri - a response to a Bolshevik mischaracterisation of anarchism, Fabbri argues for anarchism as anti-state communism.

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Anarchism and Organisation - Errico Malatesta - classic work on the need of anarchists to organise themselves in relation to the class struggle.

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My Disillusionment in Russia - Emma Goldman - famous book outlining her experiences of the degeneration of the 1917 Russian Revolution

*Edited by libcom from an article by the Anarchist Federation.*